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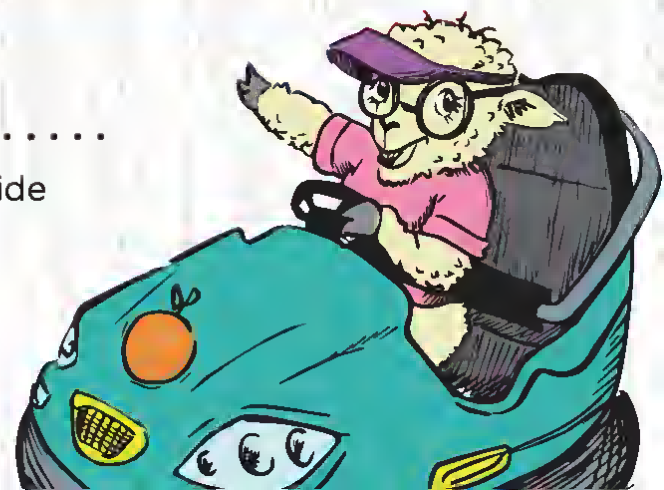

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Wed, August 8, 8 p.m. Free Lecture "Gospel of Judas"
Monday, August 13, 8 pm. Spirit Circle-Seance $20.00
Sunday, August 19, 2 - 6 p.m. Tarot Reader Carl Young $8 & up
Sun, Aug 26, 6 p.m. T. Mierzwicki "Ancient Curses/Binding Spells" Workshop/Book Signing $15
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KEVIN LARA

up front

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on the cover

Photo by Maximus McKamey
Design by Richie Backman

HeyYou!

» ANONYMOUS

Band Divas

BOB AUL

We all know it's hard to be a band on tour. Certain bands don't make it easy on themselves—such as the band of East Coast hipsters who recently opened for us at a local venue. You were lucky enough to jump on at the last minute as an opener. Instead of being grateful, you waltz in, scowl at everyone who isn't in your crew, take up half the merch area with every T-shirt, button and beer koozie you could scrape out of your van, leaving almost zero room for the other local bands who might wanna sell some shit as the band that people actually recognize. Then you take FOR EVER to sound check, pushing the entire lineup back at least half an hour. All the while, you strut around on- and off-stage, wearing sunglasses indoors and whispering to one another about how the East Coast is SO much cooler than here. I never take joy in watching a band play to the DJ at the back of the room, but seriously, I hope it helped to deflate your ego enough for you to fit through the door on the way out.

HEY, YOU! Send anonymous thanks, confessions or accusations—changing or deleting the names of the guilty and innocent—to "Hey, You!" *c/o OC Weekly*, 18475 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley CA 92708, or email us at letters@ocweekly.com

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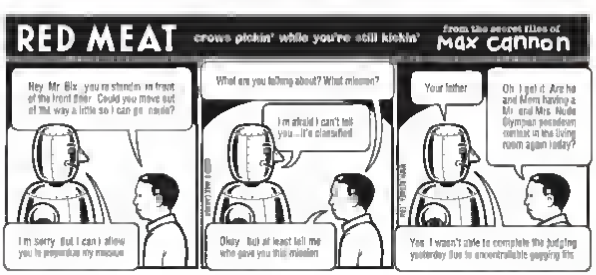
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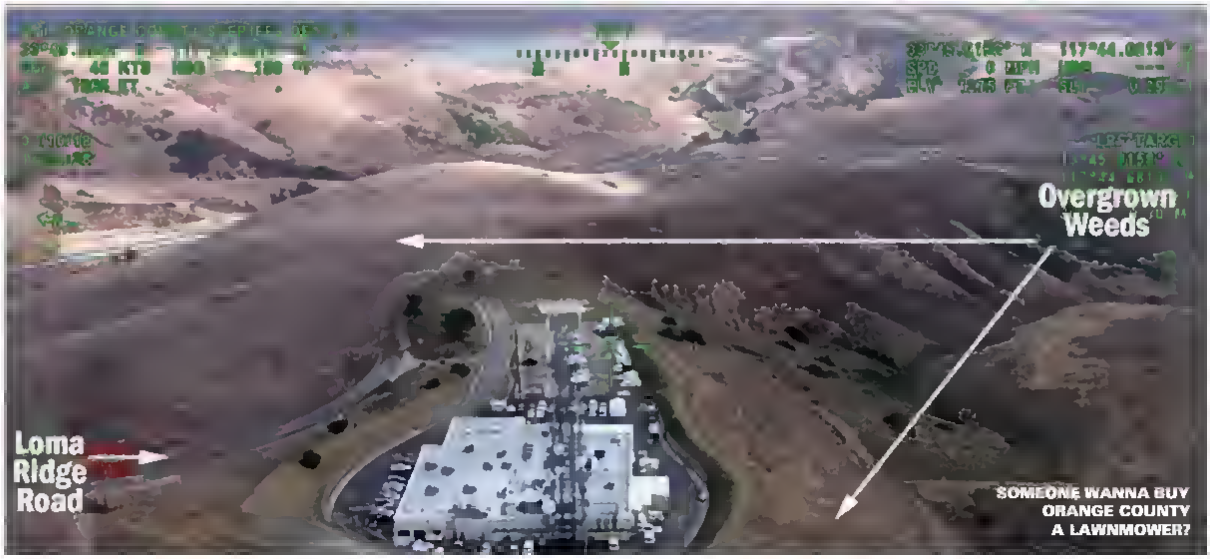


COURTESY OF OC GRAND JURY

A Danger to Itself

OC grand jury says Orange County Emergency Operations Center is vulnerable in an emergency

BY ANTHONY PIGNATARO

High atop Loma Ridge is the Orange County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Consider it the main command center during a big disaster. From there, 150 or more emergency responders and public officials can coordinate efforts to deal with anything ranging from a major earthquake to a mass shooting. It's hard to overstate the facility's vital importance for dealing with emergencies, yet multiple Orange County grand jury reports—including one released on June 20—indicate the EOC itself is tremendously vulnerable.

It's remarkable the grand jury has issued four reports on threats posed to the EOC, dating back to 1998. But it's even more remarkable that 11 years ago, the facility was nearly destroyed the first time it was activated in a full-scale disaster (a fact the grand jury mentioned much too briefly in its most recent report). That instance was the horrendous 2007 Santiago Fire, which ultimately burned more than 28,000 acres, destroyed 42 structures and damaged another 14.

The EOC's vulnerability to fire isn't surprising, given it sits on the edge of a massive "Very High Fire Hazard Area," according to Cal Fire. In fact, just a couple of hours into the Santiago Fire (which burned for 19 days before firefighters contained it), the fire threatened the EOC. The Orange County Fire Authority's (OCFA) after-action report on that disaster paints a vivid picture of the threat posed to the county's main command center dealing with the fire:

"During the evening hours of Sunday, Oct. 21, within the first two hours of the fire, the county EOC, which is located at the [Orange County Sheriff's Department's (OCSD)] Loma Ridge Communications Facility, was surrounded by fire. The EOC and Emergency Communications Bureau staff were sheltered in place during this time, and an OCFA Strike Team was assigned to protect the facility. Access was restricted for over two hours as a result of this threat. Firefighters initiated an offensive backfiring operation, anchoring it to the single-lane road that provides access to the EOC. This essential facility remained fully staffed and operational during this time, and structure-protection resources were posted outside to deflect the fire and protect the facility in the event it became necessary. Firefighters burned out brush and grass fuels ahead of the main fire and moved quickly to cut off the main fire. The backfire was successfully completed and eliminated the direct threat to the facility."

Though that was more than a decade ago, the grand jury said in its June 20 report that the EOC is still vulnerable. Titled "Can the Emergency Operations Center Survive a Catastrophic Event?," the report states, "During multiple tours of the EOC facility, the grand jury noted issues that present major concerns should there be a large-scale disaster such as a brush fire or earthquake."

That report highlighted four major safety findings at the EOC. The first, and arguably most important, is that the 1.3-mile-long Loma Ridge Road—the main access route into the facility—is "dangerous." The roadway has "deterioration and earth slippage," "blind curves," and "very steep drop-offs with no barriers," which the grand jury called "inordinately dangerous."

"These conditions pose significant danger to the staff working at the EOC on a daily basis," the report continues. "During a disaster, when many more vehicles are using the road to and from the facility, safety issues are magnified."

Of course, there's an alternate access road into the EOC, but the grand jury discovered that route is somehow even worse. "This is the Loma Ridge Jeep Trail, a very narrow dirt path," the report says. "Due to its unpaved condition, it is unsuitable for emergency or other vehicles traveling to or from the EOC."

Then there's the issue with dry brush and weeds, despite what happened in 2007, there's apparently a lot of it once again surrounding the EOC. "[T]he grand jury noted an abundance of overgrown weeds at the edge of the road and on the shoulders, obstructing many of the areas where vehicles must maneuver when trying to pass each other," the report states. "Not only does this overgrowth affect the ability to drive along the road, [but] it [also] presents a serious fire hazard."

What's more, the grand jury discovered that efforts to control all that brush have fallen apart in recent years. According to the report, the OCSD is responsible for maintaining the land around the EOC, though it hired a contractor to do the work, that contract hasn't been funded for five years.

"Since 2013, the Sheriff has requested $950,000 each year to address the deterioration of the road, but the Board of Supervisors has not provided that funding," explains the grand jury report.

As if all that weren't enough, the grand jury also noted that inside the EOC, "Office equipment and storage cases have not been properly secured to work stations or to the walls." In an earthquake, "equipment could be damaged or made inoperable, potentially impairing emergency operations."

County officials, who have 60 days to respond to the report, had no comment for this story. "The county will be formally responding to the grand jury report at a later date," County Public Information Manager Molly Nicholson said in a July 11 email.

Similarly, OCSD Public Information Officer Carrie Braun said her department expects to file its official response toward the end of this month.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

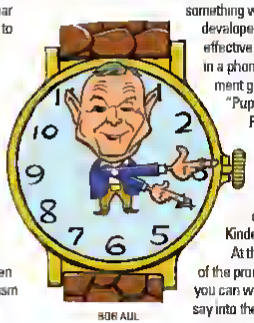
Young Guns

» MATT COKER

Harley Rouda the Democrat seeking the 48th Congressional District seat this November, had better keep his radar up for conservative provocateur James O'Keefe and his hidden cameras.

That is because universal provocateur Sacha Baron Cohen and his un-hidden cameras recently stung Representative Dana Rohrabacher (R-Putin's Sizzle Reel), a 30-year member of Congress seeking to hold onto the 48th seat in the same election.

The latest project from the mind and made-up face behind Ali G, Borat and Brüno Gehard is *Who Is America?*, which debuted Sunday night on the Showtime cable network. Early that same morning, Showtime teased the new series by posting a 10-minute clip on YouTube that showed Cohen made up as Israeli anti-terrorism expert Colonel Erran Morad.



SCHEE AUL

Morad proclaims the solution to school shootings in America is his "Kinder-Guardians" initiative, which would start arming children as toddlers so they may defend themselves.

That may sound ridiculous to you, but based on the *Who Is America?* premiere, Kinder-Guardians makes perfect sense to Larry Pratt, executive director emeritus of Gun Owners of America, who reads for Morad/Cohen a script that cites "science" as proving that young children process images faster than adults, thanks to "elevated levels of the pheromone blink-182, produced by a part of the liver known as the Rita Dra."

Philip Van Cleave, president of the Virginia Citizens Defense League, also takes the Kinder-Guardians bait, although he does caution that children "haven't quite developed what we call 'conscience,' where you feel guilty about doing something wrong . . . If they haven't developed that yet, they can be very effective soldiers." He is later shown in a phony public-service announcement going over with Morad the "Puppy Pistol."

Former Senate majority leader Trent Lott (R-Mississippi) and ex-Republican congressman out of Illinois Joe Walsh also appear on camera to sing the praises of Kinder-Guardians.

At the 8-minute,44-second mark of the promotional teaser on YouTube, you can watch and hear Rohrabacher say into the camera, "Maybe having young people learn how to train and defend their schools might actually make us safer here."

Rohrabacher issued a statement Tuesday claiming a "bogus" Israeli television company set up the interview and that he did not advocate guns for toddlers, but rather high-school students.

Got Dana Watch fodder? Email mcoker@ocweekly.com.

Political Fútbol

» STEVE LOWERY

Dasvidaniya, Russia!

RECAP: Well, it was a World Cup that many said was the best, most exciting ever. The proof was in the fact that old favorites (Brazil, Germany) were upset, small upstarts (Belgium, Croatia) flourished, and many matches were decided by dramatic penalty-kick shootouts, the stupidest way of deciding a contest this side of the Electoral College. Ultimately, the Big Winner, the Champion of Champions, was, of course, Russia. They ran an efficient, problem-free tournament, in which everything ran smoothly and everyone was happy. Or, at least that's what its state-run media, i.e., FOX, said. FOX not only cleaned up the present, but also attempted to sanitize the past by running a "report" about Stalin's vacation home. Now, if you thought the term "Stalin's vacation home" was a euphemism for the gulags where millions were imprisoned and died, I'm right with you. The piece called Josef Stalin—known as Murderous Josef Stalin to close friends—a "polarizing figure," you know, in that way Hitler and cancer and the final episode of *Seinfeld* is polarizing. It was the worst example of trying to paint a happy face on human misery since that Jerry Lewis movie in which he plays a clown in a Nazi death camp *with no pool tables!* Yes, destroying the very essence, the very soul of a nation is exhausting; some need to recharge by playing pool, while others enjoy golf. The whole thing had the air of "MTV Cribs Does Journalism" with the expected results: "Was Stalin a homicidal monster? Who cares—check out that killer view!"

POST-GAME: Putin successfully presented a kinder, gentler Russia. Consider that when several demonstrators interrupted the World Cup Final by running onto the pitch, they were not shot with plutonium-dipped bullets. Not immediately. Putin continued his winning streak after the World Cup by flying to meet with Donald Trump, the bully who becomes absolutely Richard-Speck-After-He-Grew-Boobs-In-Prison smitten when he's around Vlad. It was at this summit that Trump said he trusted Putin more than the American intelligence community, a display termed "disgraceful" by politicians and journalists and "good slave" by stern mistresses and dungeon masters. One newspaper likened Trump's performance to "licking Putin's boots." That's not entirely accurate, of course...since it omitted the part in which he was repeatedly made to be intimate with the pointier varieties of vegetables. Then he played golf.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

A Dish Best Served Cold

Is there a revenge factor in the opening of a new Santa Ana eatery?

BY SAVANNAH MUÑOZ

JOHN GILHOOLEY

Two Mexican restaurants on the edge of Santa Ana's gentrified East End Promenade oppose each other in more ways than one. El Mercado Modern Cuisine rests near the Yost Theater with its heralded cocktails and concept menu featuring flavors from different Mexican states. Across the way from El Mercado is Cevichería Nais, the newest spot on the scene that's perhaps better known for its early business association with #MeToo'd former OC Labor Federation executive director Julio Perez than anything coming out of the kitchen.

The two eateries are within easy walking distance of each other, but legal battles set them worlds apart. Alongside his wife, Cevicheria Nais chef Danny Godinez, once involved with El Mercado, is currently suing the other restaurant's partners, Fernando Franco, Doris Valencia and manager Jose Cerrudo. El Mercado returned the favor by filing a countersuit.

The lawsuits and the bad blood they reveal add a layer of intrigue as to why Godinez would open a new restaurant so close to one he's trying to legally destroy. Filed in July 2017, the chef's complaint is rife with a self-assessment of his "stellar reputation" on OC's foodie scene. "Daniel's credibility and reputation as a chef have become jeopardized by El Mercado," the suit alleges. How so?

In September 2016, El Mercado opened its doors, with Godinez cooking in the kitchen for the soft and grand openings. He cites his past success with Anepalco Mexican Restaurant in Orange as having given him the clout to secure an "extremely favorable lease" from S&A Properties, the company run by Irv and Ryan Chase that has gentrified downtown Santa Ana in recent years. The countersuit alleges that Godinez had entered into an oral agreement with Franco and Cerrudo in October 2015 to create a full menu, develop recipes, train kitchen personnel and, most important, cook. But on opening day, according to Franco, Valencia and Cerrudo, the menu and recipes were incomplete, kitchen staff were inadequately trained, and the full costs and inventory hadn't been gathered.

Furthermore, the lawsuit says, the cook left the kitchen in breach of his agreement and promises. "After Sept. 17, 2016, Daniel Godinez did not return to the El Mercado Restaurant," it claims.

That December, Godinez and his wife, Amarylis Lopez, say they attempted to negotiate a buyout, as she was a part of the operating agreement for El Mercado. They claim to have invested $100,000 in the project and that El Mercado's partners didn't provide any profit and loss statements or balance sheets, "even though they agreed to do so." In representing Godinez and Lopez, lawyer Norma V. Garcia, Orange County Hispanic Bar Association's current "attorney of the year," paints a portrait of Franco, Valencia and Cerrudo as a trio that failed to pay debts, let the restaurant bank balance fall below $0, and did not take Godinez's ideas into consideration but used his reputation to attempt to receive discounts with vendors.

In any legal battle, of course, there are two versions of what actually happened. Franco, Valencia and Cerrudo's countersuit, filed in April by the Irvine-based Lee E. Burrows firm, gives a very different account of what went on outside the kitchen. Relying on Godinez's oral agreement, they say they bought kitchen equipment, entered a lease and made improvements to the location. They also hired staff and acquired expenses for obtaining a liquor license. As El Mercado was just weeks away from its grand opening, they claim that Godinez revealed he was working on Maestro Restaurant in Pasadena. "The only reason Daniel Godinez informed Jose Cerrudo and Fernando Franco at that time was because he had failed to prepare the agreed-upon menu, establish an inventory, develop recipes, train staff or develop costing for menu items," the suit alleges.

While El Mercado's grand opening was in September, Godinez had publicly announced Maestro in Eater LA in June, months before its opening. But the trio believes Godinez was involved with developing Maestro for at least several months before entering his oral and operating agreements in October 2015. "Daniel Godinez never intended to fulfill his promises or agreements with El Mercado and instead intended to leave El Mercado to develop Maestro Restaurant, which he apparently believed offered him greater opportunity and/or prestige," the suit alleges.

Maestro had its grand opening in January 2017, a month after Godinez and Lopez say they attempted to negotiate a buyout from El Mercado. In an eyebrow-raising turn of events, Godinez left his chef position at Maestro, where Eater LA called his ceviche "flat and uninteresting," just eight months later to return to OC, where he'd eventually plan a new concept restaurant based on the dish at Diego's Rock-N-Roll Bar & Eats' old digs.

The professed damage to Godinez's credibility at the crux of his suit against El Mercado seems trivial in comparison to where he stands now. In opening Cevichería Nais down the street, the chef faced a hailstorm of criticism, a barrage of bad Yelp reviews and promised boycotts after it was revealed in state corporation filings that he teamed up with Perez, the disgraced labor boss fired in January after an investigation found multiple sexual-harassment claims to be credible. In a time when the world is mourning the loss of Anthony Bourdain's politically aware food commentary, Godinez told Eater LA that Perez voluntarily divested from Santo Brothers Group, the business that owns Cevicheria Nais, and that the criticisms were "all politics." Godinez insisted he's just a chef that cooks.

After the *Weekly*'s story about Perez's involvement (see Matt Coker's "Ousted Labor Chief Julio Perez Reemerges as a Partner at Danny Godinez's Restaurant," May 30), Cevicheria Nais refiled its business paperwork, this time without him listed as secretary. While Perez may be out amid Godinez's claims that he doesn't "do politics," that still leaves the question as to why he eyed the location for a new restaurant so close to the one he is trying to have dissolved against its will.

Cevicheria Nais may not have an announced grand-opening date, but the lawsuit has a Nov. 19 trial date in the courtroom of Orange County Superior Court Judge Gregory H. Lewis.

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OC WEEKLY PRESENTS

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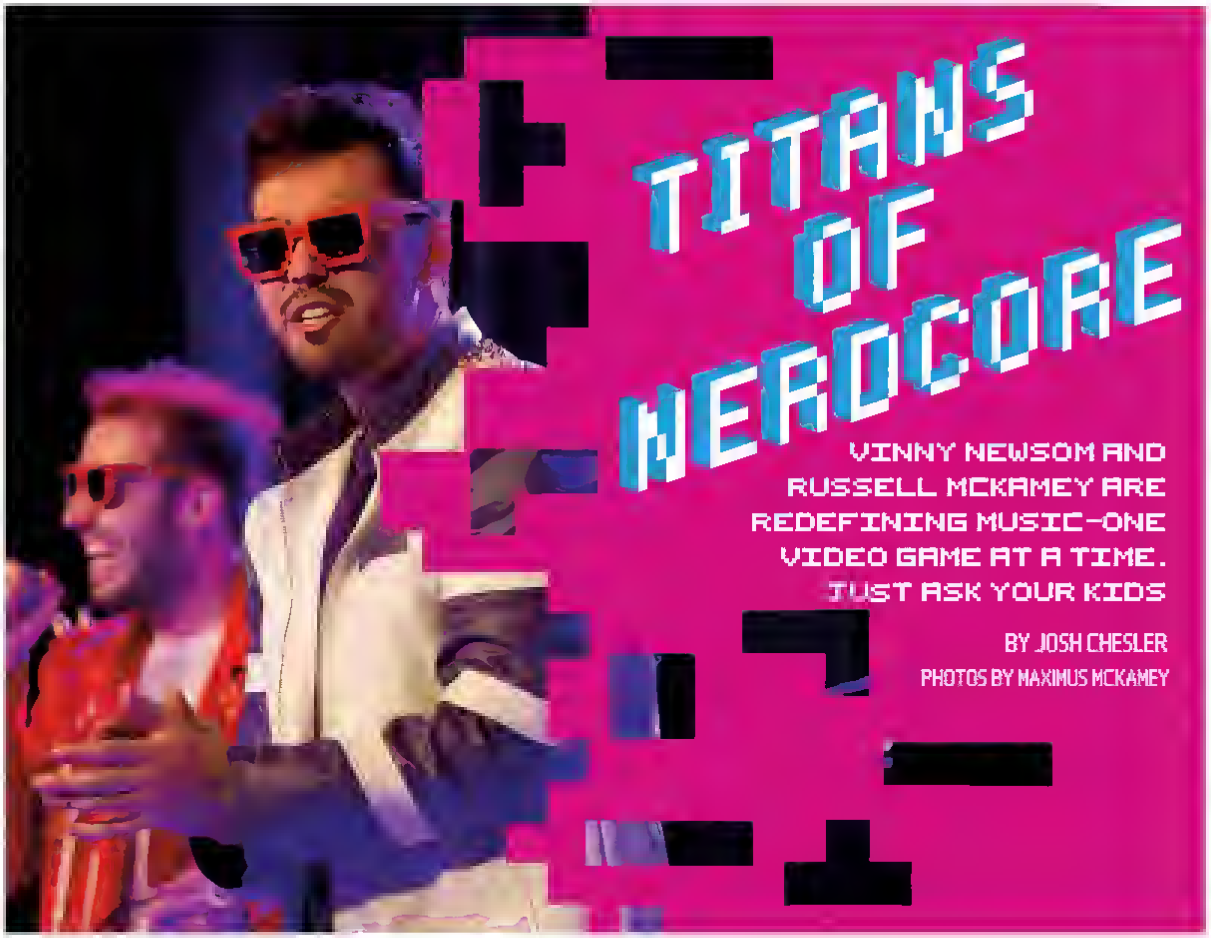

TITANS OF NERDCORE

VINNY NEWSOM AND RUSSELL MCKAMEY ARE REDEFINING MUSIC—ONE VIDEO GAME AT A TIME. JUST ASK YOUR KIDS

BY JOSH CHESLER

PHOTOS BY MAXIMUS MCKAMEY

It could be the sunlight bouncing off his shiny purple hair or the bit of IPA foam resting just under his 1970s-style mustache—or maybe it's his boisterously displayed opinions on topics such as YouTube algorithms and new *Overwatch* characters—but Vinny Newsom is drawing more than a few middle-aged eyes to his table at Rip Beer Co. No one in the Sunset Beach brewery seems to know who he is, but that's to be expected when the bulk of Newsom's millions of online fans are barely old enough to drive, let alone drink.

"If I were to ask any parent who had a kid between the ages of 8 and 12 if their kid had ever listened to a song about a video game, 100 percent of them would say, 'Yes,'" Newsom says. "If you took a poll of hundreds of them, it would probably be every single parent. They might not listen to it because they think it's not real music or just silly, but we try to make the chorus of every song catchy enough and use [professional-grade] production value. We try to make enjoyable songs for everyone."

As one half of "nerdcore" duo Rockit Gaming, Newsom—who goes by "Vinny Noose" for internet purposes—wasn't the first to make a career out of writing and recording songs about video games, but he's among the most prolific. With close to 230,000 subscribers and almost 50 million views on YouTube, Newsom and his business partner/band mate, Russell McKamey, have become one of the most consistent and professional gaming-based musical acts in the world.

But in rapidly growing industries such as gaming and YouTube, even the relatively stable and financially viable career Rockit Gaming has brought to its two members is baffling to most people older than 30. Although the duo has composed soundtracks for games and performed during gaming award shows and conventions, Newsom knows all too well about the negative connotations that accompany the title of "YouTuber" as a chosen profession.

Aside from recently amassing another 200,000 monthly listeners on Spotify and developing accounts on Apple Music, iTunes, Google Play and several streaming services, everyone from major companies such as Nintendo to renowned indie publishers such as tinyBuild have worked with Newsom and McKamey. And yet the 28-year-old Newport Beach native has been making moves to expand the duo's music to platforms both on and off the web.

"[Nerdcore] gets so many views on YouTube, but nobody really knows what it is in the music industry," Newsom says. "We have more monthly listeners on Spotify than some of the artists on [Spotify's] big New Music Friday list, but we're not being pushed like they are. We'll reach out to people in the music industry saying that we'd love to work with them, and they don't respond. They don't realize what it is because it started out with so many parodies and silly stuff, so people think of it as a parody thing.

"We're trying to really merge into the music industry because we bring a really professional-grade quality to the songs that's really untouched by the other artists," Newsom continues. "[McKamey] is a monster when it comes to production, and I think him bringing his production value to it changes everything. We always judge things by percentages, so we'll be working on a song like, 'That's 92 percent radio quality,' and then he'll go in and tweak the rest of it."

Whether or not Rockit Gaming manages to put nerdcore on the mainstream map in the near future, the genre's ascen-

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

OCWEEKLY

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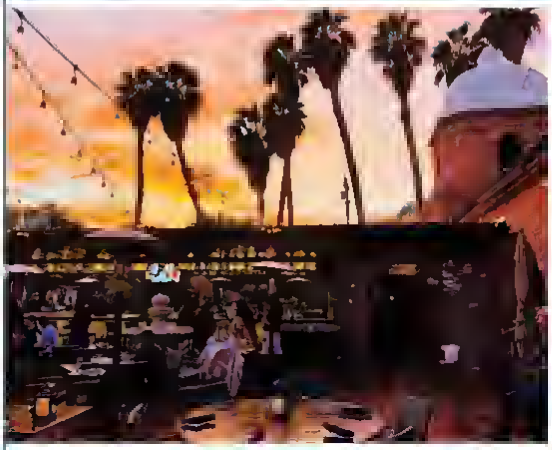

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ANNIE SLOAN STOCKIST

TITANS OF NERDCORE

» FROM PAGE 11

sion seems inevitable. What started in the early 2000s as a small subgenre of hip-hop about video games has grown into a wildly diverse and popular style of music for those who have grown up with gaming and YouTube as their primary forms of entertainment. Much like '90s gangster rap and the now-nostalgic third-wave emo movement of the 2000s, the dividing line between those who contribute to nerdcore's 4 billion YouTube views and those who see it as nothing but foolishness tends to be right around the age of 18. But what Newsom wants to prove to his peers and elders is there's no reason a song about the characters or story of a video game should be scoffed at any more than a tune about a movie, book or other work of fiction.

"Video game characters are characters, too," Newsom says. "One of the biggest songs of 2016 was the song about *Suicide Squad*. Even though it's about the movie, nobody gives a crap that it's about the movie if they're not interested in it because it's just a good song. The way we try to write it is specific enough that all of the gamers who enjoy the games will latch on to specific references about the games, but it's still general enough that somebody who isn't a gamer can understand it, too."

Growing up, Newsom either had a controller or an instrument in his hands. When he wasn't learning to play piano or guitar along with his musically inclined parents, Newsom—whose father still performs in a "dad band"—spent hours working his way through classic games such as *Diddy Kong Racing* and *Crash Bandicoot*. But he discovered his passion for songwriting when his mother insisted he take the option of creating a song instead of a more conventional type of presentation to complete a grade-school project.

From there, Newsom wrote songs about anything and everything, eventually performing his first concert as an Elliott Smith-inspired teenage "sad boy" at Newport Beach's Alta Coffee. The young songwriter moved north to attend Cal State Chico, where he pursued both music and technology. It was in a songwriting class that Newsom met McKamey.

"[McKamey and I] were both majoring in music business, and we took a bunch of classes together but never really knew each other," Newsom says. "In our last year, we took a songwriting class together, and we were the first two people to share our songs. I went up to him after class and asked him where he recorded his song, and he said it was in his kitchen. That basically started our friendship, and after that, we were always writing music together."

After a short collegiate run with a pop-punk cover band called Girls Drink Free (each of the four band members would dress in tank tops and pants of the color of their chosen party cup—a lesson in spectacle and showmanship that Rockit Gaming continues to this day), Newsom found himself unhappy as a technology salesman living in the Bay Area with his grandparents. A few years and considerations of giving up and moving back in with his parents later, the temporarily retired songwriter was intrigued by an extremely risky proposition from McKamey to pursue a career in video-game-related songwriting.

"[McKamey] hit me up to work on this little project as a side job because we were both working in sales at the time," Newsom says. "It started as a way for us to stay working together on music, but then it really started gaining some traction, and we realized it could be a pretty serious thing. [McKamey] said, 'Dude, quit your job and move to Austin with me. It's going to be sick!' and I was like, 'Nah.' Then I went home and thought about it and realized that it was the only time in my life when I could make that decision. I didn't want to regret not doing it when I was 35 and had kids, so I quit my job and moved to Austin, Texas, two weeks later."

Of course, the beginnings of any band are generally far from glamorous, and a YouTube-based duo for a niche market in 2015 is a tough sell. In order to stretch his

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savings and limited income from a few odd jobs in Texas (such as customer support for FedEx) as far as possible, Newsom set up in McKamey's kitchen before the two gained enough of a following to make Rockit Gaming a full-time endeavor and moved into a slightly bigger space.

Although it took them a couple of years to establish themselves and reach an audience big enough for the guys to make a living, the past year or so has seen them take an immense step up in popularity and recognition. Newsom believes there are only a few nerdcore acts that can keep up with Rockit Gaming at this point, and their combination of McKamey's professional-quality production skills, consistent weekly release schedule, and mature understanding of the corporate world has made them a go-to for not only young fans, but also video-game publishers and artists within the genre.

"[Newsom] is one of the most creative people in the industry," says tinyBuild CEO Alex Nichiporchik. "I'm loving what the Rockit Gaming guys are doing."

But while companies such as tinyBuild—who has had Rockit Gaming craft everything from an album themed around the game *Hello Neighbor* to a ridiculous musical for its E3 advertisement this year—may have already embraced nerdcore as a viable artform, Newsom's biggest issue with many companies (both gaming and otherwise) has just been getting in the room with them to show them what the duo can do. As thankful as most YouTubers are for the variety of content available on their chosen platform, the bulk of it being extremely unprofessional and/or ridiculous vlogging has hurt some of the more serious creators' credibility when it comes to more traditional businesses.

From makeup and home renovation to music and car customizing, well-known YouTube specialists representing all sorts of industries often spend several years developing their personal branding before earning the opportunity to work with a brand carried in major stores. Thankfully for Rockit Gaming, that divide between online videos and "the real world" is getting smaller by the day, and Newsom's experience in the music and technology industries is paying off.

"Our dream is to set up our own record label and hire new artists to become the new Rockit Gaming," Newsom says. "[McKamey] and I would become the back line and keep writing songs, but there'd be all these new artists to perform them. It's like how the music industry is run today—a band like Maroon 5 doesn't write their own songs. We like to write in so many different genres and do so many different things that some songs might sound better for someone else. We're trying to take this to the next level, and now a lot of our colleagues are starting to do the same. At the end of the day, we're all just songwriters who want to work together."

For now, Newsom's happy to continue cranking out songs about video games big and small. While the idea of sticking to one topic may seem a bit dull for some, the incredible amount of new releases and stories in the gaming world mean the Rockit Gaming guys rarely have to stretch for content. For that matter, they've already released more songs in their three-year career than most musical acts do in a decade, and their ability to turn around a professional-grade song and entertaining music video within a few days helps them beat most of their colleagues to the latest subjects.

"Staying on top of trends is probably what me and [McKamey] are best at," Newsom says. "There are so many games coming out and so many trending topics that we'll never run out of things to write about—and we're both workaholics who love writing songs and are obsessed with things sounding pristine. We haven't missed [releasing a song on] a Friday in over two years, and normally, we come out with two songs per week because everybody started writing songs on Fridays. We release a song on Friday, decide what song we're going to do next over the weekend, and then we usually write it the next day."

Once the song is written and recorded, they head into their own rooms so McKamey can mix and master the track while Newsom puts together a music video, (usually) composed of gameplay footage and emphasized lyrics. While the stress of constantly having to come up with new material in appropriate genres and the never-ending grind of pleasing the internet in order to live a relatively modest lifestyle might not fit for everyone, the songwriter can't see himself ever doing anything else. After all, every time he feels as if he's lost a battle in his fight for validation from an outside industry, all he has to do is look at the recent past to see how far his medium has come.

"I was just reading an article from, like, 10 years ago about how advertisers aren't going to want to go to YouTube," Newsom says. "Obviously, they were wrong. The whole world is there, and gaming is literally the biggest entertainment industry in the world. A few years ago, people were talking about how [*Star Wars*:] *The Force Awakens* hit a billion dollars in 13 days, but *Grand Theft Auto V*—which isn't even the biggest game in the world—did that in three days. Right now, the gaming industry is doing exactly what we're doing in that they're trying to be taken seriously for what they do. It's going to take everyone a little while to get there, but it's not going backward."

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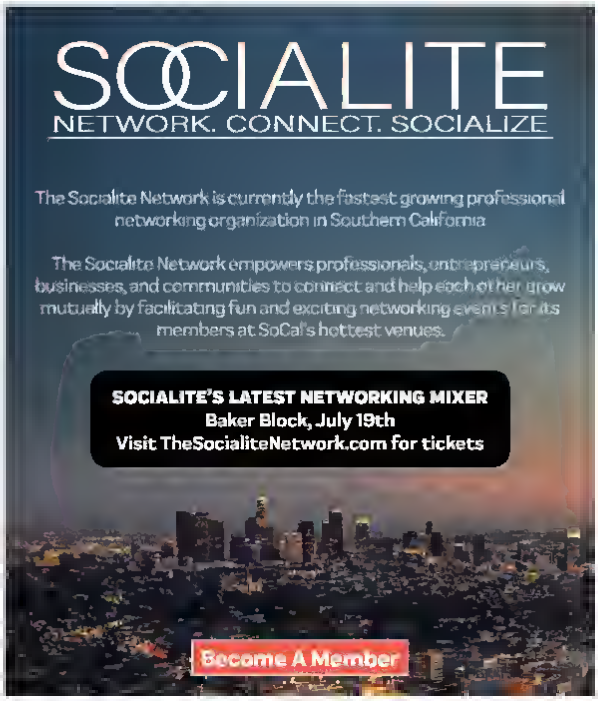
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fri/07/20

[CONCERT]

TALE OF TWO MARTINS

Steve Martin & Martin Short

Steve Martin and Martin Short have a new Netflix special, a new tour to go with it and a very old friendship that dates back to the time in 1986 when they served as 66 percent of the *amigos* in a classic comedy Western. Maybe it's not exactly like a reunion tour from a much-loved and much-missed band, but there's something effortlessly melodic about the way these two perform together. And while you can get a comprehensive preview of this set online, the real thing offers improv (possibly *Three Amigos*-related), music (absolutely banjo-related) and the sort of unscripted surprises we can't predict here because they're just that unpredictable. With 30 years of history, they've got so much to work with.

Steve Martin & Martin Short, featuring the Steep Canyon Rangers and Jeff Babko, at the Pacific Amphitheatre, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa. (714) 708-1500, pacamp.com. 8 p.m. $65-$125. —CHRIS ZIEGLER

[THEATER]

Forgotten History

The Twentieth-Century Way

Tom Jacobson's engrossing play *The Twentieth-Century Way* immerses viewers in a story based on true events taking place more than a century ago. Back in 1914, two actors are hired by the Long Beach police department as "vice specialists" to goad possible gay men into exposing their genitals, then arrest them. But what begins as an earnest rehearsal enacting their vice raid entrapment evolves into a sequence of line-blurring scenes wherein the two men delve deeper into their own sexual identities, as well as the oppressive institutions around them. The play is carried entirely by its two-person cast, Christian Jordan Skinner and Noah Wagner, and includes some serious adult content and nudity, so viewer discretion is advised.

The Twentieth-Century Way at Long Beach Playhouse, 5021 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 494-1014; www.lbplayhouse.org. 8 p.m. Through Aug. 18. $10-$20. —AIMEE MURILLO

sat/07/21

[PERFORMING ARTS]

HONORING AN ICON

Heroes: I Am Harvey Milk

For their *Heroes* series finale, MenAlive—OC's premier gay men's chorus—have a tremendous show in store. This concert/musical/storytelling experience uses the music of U2 and other popular groups to honor the life of Harvey Milk, the radical mayor of San Francisco, who was the first openly gay politician to run for (and win!) a position in the late '70s. The show also features words and music by Andrew Lippa and is the local premiere of the show (after having debuted in San Francisco by the San Francisco Gay Men's Chorus). Through these performances, you can dive even deeper into the life of the political icon and learn how his actions made a difference for later generations.

Heroes: I Am Harvey Milk at the Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-4646. www.thebarclay.org. 3 & 8 p.m. $39-$49. —AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

Dark Side Shines On!

Which One's Pink?

It's easy to have lost track how long Pink Floyd's album *The Dark Side of the Moon* has been riding the waves of Billboard's top 200 albums. It holds the record [no pun intended] as the album that has enjoyed the longest run on the charts. To commemorate the 45th anniversary of the classic album about insanity (with a nod to former Floyd front man Syd Barrett), the Pink Floyd tribute band Which One's Pink? will perform the record in its entirety. Join this renowned cover act at the Pacific Amphitheatre, and we'll see you on the dark side of the moon!

MORE » ONLINE
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Which One's Pink? Commemorating the 45th Anniversary of *The Dark Side of the Moon* at Pacific Amphitheatre, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-1500, pacamp.com. 8 p.m. $20-$25. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

sun/07/22

[FAMILY EVENTS]

Cheers to Animals!

Sunsets At the Zoo

This Sunday's event concludes the Santa Ana Zoo's 2018 summertime-evening concert-and-beer-tasting series, Sunsets At the Zoo. Yep, beer. So, after delighting in the 50-plus monkeys the zoo must keep at all times (by request of the zoo's founder, Joseph Prentice, back in the early '50s), checking out the many brightly colored birds at the aviary, and browsing the impressive array of succulents and other plant life, finish the day off with live music from a local '80s band, snacks from Costa Mesa's Taco Brat, and beers from breweries such as Bootlegger's and Gunwhale (food and drink available for additional charges, natch).

Sunsets At the Zoo at Santa Ana Zoo, 1801 E. Chestnut Ave , Santa Ana, (714) 836-4000, www.santaanazoo.org. 5:30 p.m. $19.95, members, $9.95. —ERIN DEWITT

[CONCERT]

Old-School Cool

James Intveld and the Honky Tonk Palominos

Rockabilly singer/guitarist James Intveld returns to Fairhaven Memorial to perform his annual summertime concert, and this time, he's joined by his stellar band mates, the Honky Tonk Palominos. Fans and their families are invited to bring their own picnic fixings, blankets and/or seating, while car fanatics are welcome to arrive in style in old-school cars, low riders, T-birds, even vintage motorcycles, with the chance for motorcycles and cars to win "Fan Favorite" awards. There's plenty of fun to be had at this wonderful afternoon concert, where the living and dead can convene for a rocking good time!

James Intveld and the Honky Tonk Palominos at Fairhaven Memorial Park & Mortuary, 1702 Fairhaven Ave., Santa Ana, www.fairhavenmemorialpark.com. 3 p.m. Free. —AIMEE MURILLO

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mon/07/23

[FILM]

Mooning Over Monday

Moonrise Kingdom

Wes Anderson's *Moonrise Kingdom* is meticulous, weird, charming and smart, featuring a bookish young girl runaway and brave Khaki Scout gone AWOL from Camp Ivanhoe, with both society and the elements trying to thwart them. Pup tents not permitted, but your own blankets, folding chairs and picnic dinner are encouraged at this outdoor screening. Favorite ironic romantic line: "I love you, but you don't know what you're talking about."

Moonrise Kingdom at Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.scfta.org. 8 p.m. Free. —ANDREW TONKOVICH

tue/07/24

[SCIENCE EVENTS]

Full of Stars

'America In Space'

At Santa Ana College's Tessmann Planetarium, scientists unravel the complexities of the cosmos and discover fascinating new frontiers of space exploration. In celebration of 60 years of NASA, the Tessmann team offers visitors the chance to relive great NASA missions of the past and learn about current and future ones. Are you curious about the future of Mars exploration and traveling to the moons of Jupiter? If so, pack a sack lunch to munch on while enjoying the show—then check out a rare opportunity to safely view the sun through a solar telescope and get a glimpse of an actual star! No selfies, please!

"America In Space: Celebrate 60 Years of NASA's Achievements" at Tessmann Planetarium, Santa Ana College, 1530 W. 17th St., Santa Ana, (714) 564-6672, sac.edu. 1 p.m. Through Aug. 16. $3. —SR DAVIES

wed/07/25

[ART]

Brave New Worlds

'Nery Gabriel Lemus: Yearning to Breathe Free'

In a moment when debates and discussions about immigration seem at an all-time high, multidisciplinary artist Nery Gabriel Lemus explores the perspectives of immigrants through an extraordinary series of works. Using various mediums—including watercolor painting, sculpture, even rugs—Lemus delves into the topic, informed by the poetry of 19th-century poet Emma Lazarus, specifically her sonnet "The New Colossus," which described the Statue of Liberty as a maternal light for refugees and exiles. Juxtaposing Lazarus' words in this new context, Lemus investigates the U.S. landscape an immigrant would encounter en route to following their hopes for a better life.

"Nery Gabriel Lemus: Yearning to Breathe Free" at Grand Central Art Center, 125 N. Broadway, Santa Ana, (714) 567-7233, www.grandcentralartcenter.com. 11 a.m. Through Sept. 16. Free. —AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

Bum Around

Beach Bums

Considering it's summertime, it may be the best time to check out Beach Bums. Coming out of Lolipop Records, the Los Angeles-based trio have numerous musical inspirations among them, with everything from punk to hip-hop to reggae informing their sound—a melting pot of various elements. Their latest album transmits tranquil vocals and acoustic guitar for a softer, hazier listening experience. May their show tonight be the warm, sonic experience you're hoping for, although do expect these fellas to launch into some heavier, electric jams, too. It'll be an unforgettable, immersive musical performance.

MORE » ONLINE
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Beach Bums at Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995, www.martysonnewport.com. 9 p.m. $10. 21+. —AIMEE MURILLO

thu/07/26

[ART]

FEAST YOUR EYES

'Vitality and Verve III'

A local exhibit that has been rightfully earning much hype, "Vitality and Verve III" presents works made by artists in the New Contemporary Art Movement. The group show features some site-specific art made by more than 21 individuals that playfully mesmerize the eyes and challenge viewers' minds (as the genre is wont to do). But you'll really only get a sense of what we're talking about if you go in person. The show is thoughtfully curated and put together with Los Angeles' Thinkspace Projects and the support of POW! WOW! Long Beach, the annual art cabal that takes over the city's walls every summer. Come explore where this generation's artists are taking contemporary art next.

"Vitality and Verve III" at Long Beach Museum of Art, 2300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach, (562) 439-2119, lbma.org. 11 a.m. Through Sept. 9. $8-$10, free after 3 p.m. —AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

Just As Good!

Hollywood U2

Did you miss seeing U2 at the Forum during their two-night stint in May? Have no fear: Though you may not take solace in the fact they aren't even better than the real thing, Hollywood U2 certainly ain't too shabby. Billed as the world's best U2 cover band, this group certainly have Bono's endorsement. Singer Joe Hier joined U2 onstage at the Forum during the renowned band's iNNOCENCE + eXPERIENCE tour in 2015, and Hollywood U2 counts among their admirers celebs such as Amy Adams, which is perhaps the sweetest thing. With special guests Topcat, this beloved cover band will invade Irvine Park for a night of familiar hits that hopefully won't give you a case of vertigo.

Hollywood U2 and Topcat at Irvine Regional Park, 1 Irvine Park Rd., Orange. 5 p.m. Free. —WYOMING REYNOLDS

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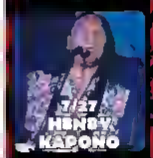

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The Wonton Clan

JA Jiaozi in Irvine stands up to inevitable comparisons to Din Tai Fung

BY EDWIN GOEI

It's hard to talk about JA Jiaozi without comparing it to Din Tai Fung. Outwardly, there are obvious similarities. Both give you a paper checklist onto which you scribble your order. Both focus on handmade dumplings, which are born from raw dough and crimped using nothing more than rolling pins, nimble fingers and patience. Heck, both feature big windows into their kitchens, through which you can see said dumplings being crafted by uniformed employees wearing facemasks. But it's when you get into the gritty details that the differences float to the surface.

First, Din Tai Fung only shows you part of the process. At JA Jiaozi, the dumpling makers you see are also the dumpling cooks. Once formed, the jiaozis are taken to two stations in the same room, either to stacks of bamboo baskets, into which they are placed and steamed, or into a roiling vat of water, in which they are boiled in wire sieves.

And it's in these two cooking methods that the dumplings at JA Jiaozi differ from those of Din Tai Fung, which steams almost all of theirs. After boiling, the signature dumplings—which are filled with pork, bits of dried shrimp and shrimp roe—are drained and poured onto a plate, where they slip and slide over one another as if just-caught fish.

All the JA Jiaozi boiled dumplings look the same. The edges aren't pleated, they're merely pinched and sealed tightly around their fillings. On the plate, they have the appearance of vacuum-sealed, lump-filled sacks. You eat them here just as you would at any Chinese dumpling joint: dipped into slurries of black vinegar, soy sauce and chile oil that you mix yourself. At JA Jiaozi, there's also the option of a "house sauce," which is just a premeasured, premixed combination of the vinegar and soy.

That signature dumpling is by far the most popular item on the menu, but the cod mousse and chive jianzi is a close second. That said, it's my least favorite. You can barely detect the fish; instead, you taste only chives, or if you soak it too long, just the dipping sauce itself. But then I remember that Din Tai Fung has a similar fish dumpling that's even milder in flavor.

If there's a JA Jiaozi dumpling that welcomes comparison to Din Tai Fung's signature xian long bao, it's the beef and onion jianzi, which can be found on the steamed side of the menu. It's not built in the form of a xiao long bao; rather, it's crimped into the classic gyoza half-moon, carefully pleated with multiple folds. Yet, when you bite into it, the same kind of hot, savory soup squirts out. The skin is thicker and chewier, but the whole experience is very comparable—and just as pleasurable.

ALL STEAMED UP

@OCWMKTGDIRECTOR

You could make a meal of just the dumplings alone, which wouldn't be a bad idea. What is a bad idea is ordering the jiaozi combo sampler. The dish features five color-coded dumplings for which you will pay nearly as much as a full order of 10. Unless you're desperate for Instagram likes, skip this rainbow-hued rip-off. Also, avoid the sesame cod fish rolls, which are outrageously priced when you consider they're just six really skinny egg rolls served with two insipid dipping sauces (one of which I swear is probably just Thousand Island).

Instead, you should be filling out your meal with starches such as the shrimp fried rice which is slightly dryer than Din Tai Fung's, but upgraded with a toupee of shaved bonito flakes and studded with asparagus sliced into coins. There's also an excellent green-bean dish that's oil-blanched to crinkle the skin, then stir-fried with XO sauce. If the sauce ends up making it spicier and tangier than Din Tai Fung's more straightforward Taiwanese version, it's not by accident—this is how the dish usually tastes in Mainland China, from where JA Jiaozi reportedly hails.

But JA Jiaozi isn't strictly Chinese. It seems to provide a wide berth for its chefs to experiment. There's quinoa in another plate of fried rice, cactus in an appetizer salad, and quail eggs in the dish of star-anise-perfumed braised brisket, which was my favorite part. There's even something called Imperial Court Yogurt for dessert, which turned out to be a pretty convincing riff on panna cotta.

Make no mistake, however: No matter what you order, you will come to the realization that JA Jiaozi is not an inexpensive restaurant. To be fair, Din Tai Fung isn't either. Both cater to the Chinese nouveau riche. But just as they are similar in price and function, JA Jiaozi and Din Tai Fung are as different as Marvel and DC, iPhones and Samsungs. And isn't it wonderful we live in a time in which we have the option of choice?

JA JIAOZI
13776 Jamboree Rd., Irvine, (714) 786-8999; www.jajaozi.com. Open daily, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. & 5-9 p.m. Dishes, $7.50-$12.50. Beer and wine.

WHAT THE ALE
» GREG NAGEL

Worth the Trip

Five years ago, my prayers were answered on the brew deck at Firestone Walker's Paso Robles brewery. Brewmaster Matt Brynildson handed me a crystal-clear snifter of golden beer topped with a finger of white, frothy head. "This is our newest beer, Pivo Pils—a hoppy pilsner inspired by a beer I had while traveling Italy," he said in his distinct central Cali-Michigan accent as he tugged at his pointed beard.

He was referring to Tipopils, Birrificio Italiano's flagship beer, as brewed by Agostino Arioli, an animated Italian I met later that year at Firestone's Invitational Beer Festival. I recall asking him what he thought of Brynildson's inspired version, to which he replied, "All pilsner is made with love."

Usually brewed by brewers *for* brewers, pilsners are modeled after the Bohemian version (first brewed in Pilsen, Czech Republic), which has a soft water profile that allows hops to bloom without being harsh. Germany got onboard with the style early on, and though it seemed vastly underappreciated, the pilsner has gained in popularity over the past few years with American craft brewers, who integrate additional hops to suit our IPA-abused palates. Brewing a pilsner isn't easy, as it takes extra time for lagering, and the cracker-like maltiness leaves very little for flaws to hide behind.

When I saw Arioli was bringing his Pils and Love beer festival to the West Coast, I nearly cried. Firestone Walker kicks off the LA leg of the fest on July 28 at its Propagator in Manna Del Rey. The 2019 fest will return to South Portland, Maine, so don't miss your chance to sample the wares of more than 50 of the world's best pils makers.

PILS AND LOVE
at Firestone Walker Propagator, 3205 Washington Blvd., Marina Del Rey, www.firestonebeer.com/brewery/pils-and-love.php. July 28, 11 a.m.-4 p.m. $60. 21+.

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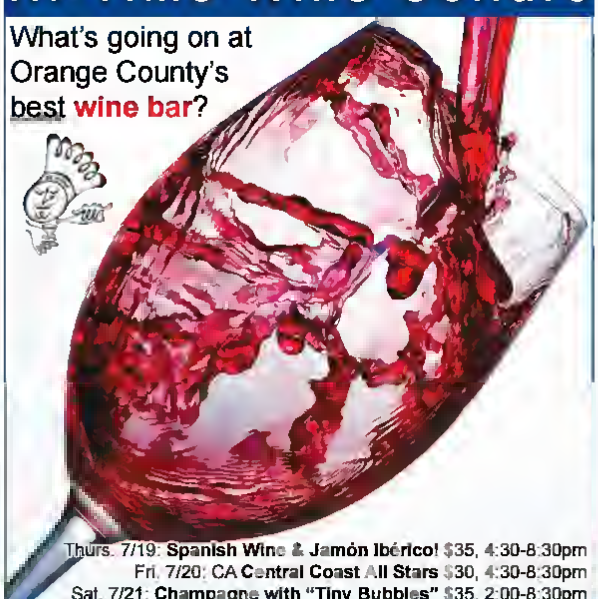

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Define *Impossible*

The new Black is one of the few places you can get an impossible Burger

SARAH BENNETT

LONG BEACH LUNCH
» SARAH BENNETT

The end of June marked week one at Black, the newest watering hole on the Broadway Corridor and the only straight bar brave enough to plop itself east of Alamitos Avenue and below Fourth Street. The Agenda Show ensured that the self-described skater bar remained full of too-cool, out-of-town visitors for the majority of its first few nights, with a door man checking IDs outside during operating hours and affordable cocktails for anyone willing to wait in the short line to get in.

That first Saturday afternoon, however, was all locals, including curious gay couples and neighborhood dive-bar addicts who slid into cushy booths, ordered drinks from the roving cocktail waitresses and played pool by the natural light flowing into what used to be Paradise Bar's perpetually empty dining room.

Food, despite a full on-site kitchen, was limited to just two entrée options, a standard pub burger and a vegetarian burger.

But Black isn't serving an ordinary veggie burger, one made with mushy mushrooms or textured soy product that dries out as soon as it hits a griddle. Just as the Social List started doing in March and Ruby's Diner has done since April, Black is serving the coveted Impossible Burger—a plant-based patty only sold to a limited number of restaurant accounts that looks, tastes and even "bleeds" as if it were a medium-rare hunk of ground beef. Even more than its cousin the Beyond Burger (available at Hamburger Mary's and Veggie Grill), the appearance and taste are so true carnivores probably won't notice it's not really meat.

Beyond Meat and Impossible Foods are both California-based firms that operate like problem-solving tech startups, using test kitchens that resemble chemistry labs to try to re-create the flavor and complexity of meat without all the environmental issues that meat production causes. After years of research and development, Beyond settled on a pea protein base with beet juice for "blood," while the Impossible team created a next-level secret sauce, so to speak, that gives its mock meat a hyper-realistic aroma, taste and feel.

The key ingredient to the Impossible Burger is soy leghemoglobin (a.k.a. "heme"), a substance found in nature in the roots of soybean plants. To reduce reliance on soybean plants, though, Impossible creates heme instead by genetically modifying yeast and jump-starting a fermentation process in its lab.

Heme is an iron-rich molecule also found in muscle meat, and it makes plant-based patties not only look like the red-then-brown we're accustomed to, but it also gives them a slightly metallic taste that conjures up nostalgia for the overprocessed glut of McDonald's hamburgers. This distinctive taste lends itself to classic preparations, so even though the Impossible patties are as thick as a hefty gastropub burger, they are most commonly sold with a standard slice of yellow (often vegan) cheese, lettuce, onions, tomato and Thousand Island dressing.

This is how it comes at Black, where Jeff Boullt (of Social, Playground and more OC heavyweights) is the current kitchen manager. Add-ons including avocado, grilled onions and a fried egg can easily push this iteration into new-favorite-pub-burger territory, meat or not.

On that first Saturday afternoon, when locals finally had a chance to explore what took over the beloved Paradise, a gay couple sat staring at two burgers, each with a few bites taken out. They'd ordered one of each of the beefy Black Burger and an Impossible Burger and were trying to determine which was which.

"She must have mixed them up. This is the meat one," the first guy said, referencing the cocktail waitress as he squinted at a juicy, pinkish patty surrounded by craggy char.

"No, this one is definitely the meat," said the other, pulling off a bit of the other patty and inspecting it before tossing it into his mouth. "I can totally taste it."

BLACK
1800 E. Broadway, Long Beach,
(562) 676-4465; blackbc.com

GREG NAGEL

Get Toasted

Bizen Beer Bar and Okayama Kobo Bakery & Cafe

"Sir, would you like a freshly baked pretzel?"

Jolted from my reading, I asked, "Huh? Are these free?"

"Yes, sir, we bake them next door and bring them over fresh for our beer bar."

Slightly confused, I pinched myself. "Sure, I'll take one," I said, ripping off the outer edge and shoving the hot, salty bread into my mouth. What I thought was just another beer bar was actually far from it. It's also a Japanese bakery? Damn, son.

What used to be a men's clothing shop, a coffee shop, then a cheese shop is now Bizen Beer Bar and Okayama Kobo Bakery & Cafe, specializing in Japanese baked goods. Bizen (pronounced *bee-zen*) refers not only to a city within the Okayama Prefecture in Japan, but also a style of pottery. Although the actual Bizen Japanese mugs aren't yet health-code-approved for use, they do make for some great bar-side decoration in the cozy pub.

Manager and beer buyer Maricella Llamas is focusing on independent craft-beer offerings, including those from soon-to-be neighbors Modern Times, Gunwhale Ales and other favorites. "Just like us, I want to support other small businesses," she says. There are also fresh kegs of Coedo, one of Japan's larger craft breweries. The only macro on hand is Sapporo, which is just a tad cheaper than the other selections.

I plopped a coaster over my glass and headed to the bakery side, where I ordered a Japanini, with basil, pesto, tomato and thick-cut bacon encased in flakey bread, a croque monsieur, a bechamel-bread concoction with ham and gooey cheese; and a Japanese curry-pan.

"We have many bakeries in Japan," explains chef Tsunetaka Kawakami. "This is our first beer bar."

Adds Tome Kukidome, Bizen's president and COO, "This is also our first location in the USA." Kawakami and Kukidome are here from Japan to assist with the Anaheim launch.

Though I had been interested in sipping my beer from an actual Bizen mug, Llamas hands me a Sapporo-branded mug filled with Coedo's ultra-fresh Ruri pilsner ($10, local beers are $7.95).

All the bread here seems to pair flawlessly with a fresh pilsner, but nothing is quite the surprise like the curry-pan ($3.75). The doughy crust opens with a belch of steam to display the sweet Japanese curry inside. The outside is light, buttery and delicate—somewhat sweet, somewhat savory. My only complaint is these treats sell out fast, so make sure to order a few extra to take home for late-night snacks. "They freeze well," notes Kawakami.

Eat & Drink This Now

» GREG NAGEL

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COURTESY OF A24

The Young and the Restless

Eighth Grade is a top-notch look at teen angst in the social-media age

BY AIMEE MURILLO

Anyone who has ever cringed their way through adolescence can tell you that eighth grade—that in-between age when you're not a child anymore and not yet a full teenager—is hell. It's hard to recall any movie that has tapped into that agony as astutely as Bo Burnham's comedy *Eighth Grade*. Starring Elsie Fisher as a 13-year-old girl named Kayla, the movie magnifies the fear and loathing of that age so perfectly, thanks to Burnham's wonderfully crafted script and Fisher's pitch-perfect performance.

There's no life-altering drama that takes place in *Eighth Grade*, but there doesn't need to be; Burnham perfectly understands that for teenagers, smaller moments are more intensely felt, small aggravations are assaults, and small decisions seemingly have life or death consequences. We meet Kayla when she's recording a video for her YouTube blog, on which she doles out helpful life advice for fellow youths (the topic for this video is "How to Be Yourself"). Intermittently through the movie, Kayla records other instructional videos—on how to make new friends or putting yourself out there—but the irony is that in real life, Kayla has trouble following through with her words. Even though she commands authority in each vlog, she fails to make any sort of impression on her peers, so much so she gets voted "Most Quiet" for the school yearbook.

Kayla focuses on breaking out of her shell to the popular kids as the school year winds down, often to unsuccessful results. At home, she's supported and bolstered by her father (played by an endearing Josh Hamilton), but at that age, what can parental encouragement fulfill that Instagram likes and the attention of the cutest boy at school can't? Watching Hamilton and Fisher go through their back-and-forth arguments (which, essentially, are about nothing except Kayla projecting) is a testament to their fantastic acting skills, and these scenes are as skin-crawlingly uncomfortable as they are hilarious.

Burnham knows a thing or two about crafting a YouTube presence, as he created his own corner of the internet with comedy videos, which propelled him to increasingly larger-scale acting and writing projects. He points his lens here on how social media and the internet can really heighten one's insecurities (hell, even as an adult that is the case) at an already-vulnerable age. Kayla, who sports bad acne and is shy fat, is seen as an *other* at her middle school, so she's transfixed by images online of her classmates and their besties posing together and making memories. That's social media for you. While we're more connected than ever before, one can feel even more alone. *Eighth Grade*, however, makes the case for viewers that you're never alone; there's always someone out there feeling the same feelings and having the same insecurities.

It's hard to know whether any other actor playing Kayla could magnetize the audience as well as Fisher does, but frankly, I can't imagine anyone else playing her. She simply has a magical presence that pulls us in and hypnotizes us, whether she's stumbling through a conversation, talking on camera for one of her YouTube videos or just gazing into her laptop screen. This is the actress' first onscreen starring role, after voicing Agnes in the *Despicable Me* films, and being able to carry a 90-minute film at a young age is a feat that will likely carry her to greater things.

I'll steer clear of stating that Elsie's story is a universal one, but viewers will find so many things that will resonate. In one such poignant scene, Kayla, who has been invited to the pool party of a popular classmate (well, more correctly, the classmate's *mother* did the inviting), surveys the party from the house before joining in. Feeling self-conscious in her bright-green swimsuit, she's literally on the outside looking in on the partygoers playing in the water, feeling the full weight of dread and anxiety of being judged or ridiculed for her looks. It's a little on the nose, sure, but it's so effectively shot and directed it feels as if it's directly addressing viewers who have gone through similar feelings, and it, like the rest of the film, gives the warmest cinematic hug. Even if you're years removed from eighth grade yourself, you'll still feel compelled to hug this film back.

EIGHTH GRADE
was written and directed by Bo Burnham, and stars Elsie Fisher, Emily Robinson and Jake Ryan

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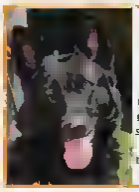

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The Healing Project

A pair of Santa Ana exhibits take on the most uncomfortable of topics

BY DAVE BARTON

Painter/sculptor Andrea Patrie doesn't give a fuck if you're uncomfortable.

Her sculptures at the new Fourth Element Gallery are creepy, corpsey, totemic things, naked, their faces animalistic, more suggested than represented. The figures rest in a Buddhist stance amid garish pink carpet (*Clay Series #1*) or are presented as a sitting male figure with a vulvic slash between its legs, nylon smearing its features like a rapist's mask (*Clay Series #2*), while another resembles a tar baby in white-face, a spike stabbed through its head (*Clay Series #4*). Powerful, despite their diminutive size, they seethe with both an erotic and a malevolent tension, as if they'd better be worshipped or they're coming after you. Revere if you must, but as with the Zuni fetish doll in *Trilogy of Terror*, they make me want to run away screaming.

Patrie's wall-sized, oil-on-canvas paintings are primarily female—girls wearing masks, posing impatiently; mugshot self-portraits; drawings of winsome young women caught in thoughtful repose—but have some of the same gender-indeterminate, unsettling sexuality of her sculptures. *Gold Tooth Mother Fucker* resembles a man on a bed wearing yellow panties, our eyes drawn to the flat surface of his crotch, with his long hair, small, flat face and muscular body, part Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, erotically charged stare down and androgynous freak show *Odalisque II* references Ingres' painting, but the nude figure pictured could be a boy or a girl, the soft, pale curves here as beckoning as the sultry concubine in the original.

Patrie's particular skill as an artist is not her ability to paint a face—most of the people pictured, even when she's painting herself, look as if they're wearing masks—but her blocks of color that so defiantly capture skin tone, place and attitude. The artist's solo show "In Front of a Dirty Double-Mirror They Found Me" has been curated with gusto by Laura Black, and while her confrontational images don't promise many dentist office sales, they're a fresh voice and vision grabbing our collars and demanding our attention.

***GOLD TOOTH MOTHER FUCKER* BY ANDREA PATRIE**

COURTESY OF FOURTH ELEMENT GALLERY

A block over, Orange County Center for Contemporary Art's (OCCCA) exhibition "It's Time" promises an "uncensored look at the Time's Up and #MeToo movements," but it never feels as ground-breaking as Patrie's work. Curated by Anuradha Vikram, the group show incorporates both feminist and anti-sexual abuse/harassment artwork, which, while not mutually exclusive, have differing agendas.

The title of the show—whose first piece is three riot shields emblazoned with "My Body My Business," "MeToo" and "Pussy Grabs Back"—promises something fierce and uncompromising inside, but it's more reactionary than revolutionary, the kind of show a snarkier person might label "typical of Orange County" art and politics. Fists get thrust into the air and tired terminology like "patriarchy" gets thrown about, but there are precious few ideas or solutions. As with last year's "Art As Protest" at OCCCA, "It's Time" feels mostly like a generalized shrug, a wallowing in despair, promising but not delivering.

There are exceptional works that rise above the rhetoric and restatement, however, offering us new ways of seeing. The limited palettes of the pastel-and-colored-pencil portraits of a child and an adolescent girl in Vivian Patton's *Up 'Til Now* reveal an emotionally stifled youth, ominous charcoal fingerprints obscuring the children's mouths, as if choking off their speech. Above the two is a portrait of a middle-aged woman, skin tones warmer and the image more hopeful, the black fingers off to the shadows at her side. Away from her face, mouth fully revealed, she is free and ready to tell her story.

Vanessa Filley's powerful color photograph of a black woman in Civil War-era clothes, a #MeToo patch stitched to her blouse like a scarlet letter, brings to mind the rape and mistreatment of slave women, recent circumstances near the border reminding us that the United States' separation of parents from their children is nothing new. Joseph Liatela's installation ode to Joan of Arc, a redwood post blackened by fire, wrapped with chains and padlocks, revels a little too much in academia-speak, but it's a moving tribute to the French heroine burned at the stake in part for cross-dressing—a rape-prevention strategy on Joan's part—as well as to every trans man or woman who stepped away from and left behind the body they no longer wanted.

Ashley Obregon's *The Healing Project* is the show's most effective piece: three fine-art prints of two women and one man, their personal stories of sexual assault printed out, below that an audio recording of them narrating their ordeal (which was missing the day I was there). The trio's words are succinct, brave, blunt and powerful, summoning up what's most integral to the movement: breaking the silence. Accompanied by white hooks in the wall where the missing recorders should be, the unused plastic clasps feel like unintentional fingers there to catch the trio if they fall.

"ANDREA PATRIE: IN FRONT OF A DIRTY DOUBLE-MIRROR THEY FOUND ME"
at Fourth Element Gallery, 210 N. Broadway Ave., Santa Ana, (657) 232-0002, www.facebook.com/4thelementgallery. Open Tues.-Sat., 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Through Aug. 1. Free.

"IT'S TIME: AN UNCENSORED LOOK AT THE TIME'S UP & #METOO MOVEMENTS"
at the Orange County Center for Contemporary Art, 117 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana, (714) 667-1517, www.occca.org. Open Thurs.-Sun., noon-5 p.m. Through Aug. 11. Free.

ARTSOVERLOAD

» AIMEE MURILLO

July 20-26

"ART COLONY: THE LAGUNA BEACH ART ASSOCIATION 1918-1935": In celebration of Laguna Beach Art Association's centennial, Laguna Art Museum presents the history and evolution of the association and how it shaped the arts in Southern California. Open Mon.-Tues. & Fri.-Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., Thurs., 11 a.m.-8 p.m. Through Jan. 13, 2019. $5-$7. Laguna Art Museum, 307 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach, (949) 494-8971, lagunaartmuseum.org.

"PAPERWORKS REFOLDED": An exhibit that celebrates the use of paper as an art material and is used by various global artists in ceramics, sculptures, origami, collage and more. Open Wed.-Sun., noon-5 p.m. Through Sept. 14. Free. Brea Gallery, 1 Civic Center Circle, Ste. 1, Brea, (714) 990-7730, www.breagallery.com.

"PASTELS": Community Art Project presents a group show of paintings connected through their use of bright colors. Open Mon.-Thurs., 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m., alternate Fridays, 7:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Through Aug. 7. Free. Laguna Beach City Hall, 505 Forest Ave., Laguna Beach.

SCHOOL OF ROCK: Based on the 2003 comedy, this updated musical finds a failed rock star posing as a substitute teacher of a private school who converts his classroom of young students into musical badasses. Opens July 24. Tues.-Fri., 7:30 p.m., Sat. 2 & 7:30 p.m., Sun., 1 & 6:30 p.m. Through Aug. 2. $29-$109. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 556-2787, www.scfta.org.

SPAMALOT: As part of its Young @ Part series, this play is a child-friendly musical version of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*. Fri.-Sat., 7:30 p.m.; Sun., 6:30 p.m. Through July 29. $10-$30. No Square Theatre at Lagon Hall, 384 Legon St., Laguna Beach, www.nosquare.org.

"URBAN FLORA II": Anne Kincaide, Greg Miller and Penelope Gottlieb each create dynamic works of art that combine an urban aesthetic with images of natural plants and botanical organisms. Open Wed.-Sun., 11 a.m.-5 p.m., and by appointment. Through Sept. 5. Free. Jeanne Artman Gallery, 328 N. Coast Hwy., Laguna Beach, (949) 510-5481, www.jeanneartmangallery.com.

"WATER WORKS": More than 50 artists present 85 watercolor paintings and water soluble paintings, paying tribute to past and present HB Art Center watercolor instructors. Open Tues.-Thurs., noon-8 p.m., Fri., noon-8 p.m., Sat., noon-5 p.m. Through Aug. 25. Free. Huntington Beach Art Center, 538 Main St., Huntington Beach, (714) 374-1650, www.huntingtonbeachartcenter.org.

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Bold Dog, New Tricks

Great Dane shows us the future of pop *music* on *Gamma Ray*

BY NATE JACKSON

There are some unintended consequences to the cutting-edge ethos of the beat scene—starting with the life cycle of its producers. Despite being one of the youngest forms of music, it's probably the only one in which a talented young beatsmith can start a scene in college, form a collective of likeminded virtuosos, travel the globe, release four albums, start his own label and feel like the Willie Nelson of the genre before hitting age 30.

"I guess I'm, like, old-school now at this point," Dane Morris, a.k.a. Great Dane, says jokingly. "But it's all relative. If I blow up to TroyBoi level someday, then this is all just the precursor, but if I don't, then I'm old-school. Let's hope for the former."

The co-founder of all-star producer, Chapman-bted collective Team Supreme is the leader of the pack and one of the scene's most recognizable names in the world of bass and sound design. To many, he's more than just a designer; the 29-year-old is the architect that brings avant-garde production together with a *Matrix*-bending poltergeist of urban genres that sounds like the future of music—and always three steps ahead of the game.

"I don't want to sound like shit that's on the radio," Morris says. "I want my shit to be on the radio, to sound like me; I want it to sound like the beat scene. Maybe not this year, maybe not in the next five years, but someday."

Sitting on the deck of Hopscotch Tavern in his native Fullerton while sipping a lager on a steamy summer day, Morris realizes he has garnered more than enough stripes to put himself somewhere ahead of a hot up-and-comer yet still decades away from actual old-timers such as Earth Wind & Fire and Smokey Robinson, whose 40-year-old classics waft over the patio's green umbrellas from the bar sound system.

And while Great Dane obviously isn't a pup anymore, it doesn't mean you can't teach an older dog new tricks. That was exactly the point of his fourth full-length album, *Gamma Ray*, out July 20 via his own imprint, ADBC Records. The 14-track effort is a soul-searching, psychoanalytic expedition into who he is now, five years after releasing his proper debut album, *Alpha Dog*, and owning the fact that his identity may not come with a brand, a sound, a vibe or any term traditionally used to define (read: constrain) an artist.

"My philosophy is agnostic," Morris says. "I'm not married to anything. I'm not a diehard believer in anything, and I think my music reflects that."

DIPLO, EAT YOUR HEART OUT!

COURTESY OF GREAT DANE

From the opening of the *Adult Swim*-style skit on "Cat's In the Bag" (featuring a laser-packing feline), *Gamma Ray* gives chase through a forest of sounds—crushing bass, hip-hop, dub, psychwave ambience. The tracks—including Morris' first real take on a structured EDM song, "Fog & Fear," featuring Katya Grasso no vocals—are a diary of his journeys around the world. For "Tokyo Surfer," the producer turned on his phone recorder while channel surfing Japanese commercials, the results of which were used as the basis for the song's beat.

One might assume a seasoned producer who has released countless tracks and once garnered a spot as a teacher at LA production school Icon Collective might be meticulous and regimented in his approach to his own beats. However, trying new techniques and reveling in happy accidents defines Morris' music. It's a lesson he learned from observing and collaborating with younger producers such as Tsuruda, with whom he lived over the past year while both producers worked on their own projects. The joy of watching someone who started off as a Team Supreme fan blossom into a beast behind the boards is one of the most exciting memories of producing *Gamma Ray*.

"The past year has been huge for [Tsuruda]; he was getting recognition from everywhere," Morris says. "Every big artist wants to work with Tsuruda, including me." But Morris believes it's his work ethic and the ability to keep an open mind that has really helped him up his game.

"You can't be too good, or else you're gonna sound like everyone else," he says. "On this album, I got good enough [that] I'm more proud of this production than any other album, but it doesn't sound like anything I've ever heard. It sounds like me, and I think that's what people like about it."

Embracing new talent is also a catalyst for Morris' latest ambitions not only as a producer, but also as a newly minted label boss. Some might've expected the co-founder of Team Supreme to push the collective into becoming a full-fledged label on its own by now. However, the producer says he eventually dropped the idea given how much effort it takes to create a truly dedicated label with all the minds who make up the collective.

"If we wanted to turn it into a label, there'd be, like, 17 people who need to weigh in on every decision, so that didn't seem like a fun thing to dive into," he says.

Instead, Morris opted to start ADBC Records, with his new album as the label's first release. You may have seen billboards popping up around LA in areas such as Echo Park and Highland Park as promotion for *Gamma Ray*. "That was a big deal for me," he says. "I'm almost as excited about those billboards as I am for the album."

What excites him even more is the prospect of ushering in new talent, much in the way Alpha Pup founder Daddy Kev did for him as an aspiring producer nearly a decade ago, when he took him under his wing and commissioned Morris to create *Alpha Dog*. Years later, Morris is taking on a similar role with young producers, including some of his former pupils from Icon Collective.

"Even though I'm not teaching there anymore, I was there for two years and noticed certain students throughout that time, and I put 'em in my back pocket, thinking if I ever have a label someday and they're not super-famous already, these are the ones I'd want to help out on," he says.

If that wasn't enough, he and some members of the Team Supreme crew are also launching a new club night called Hypnothesis at the Echo in LA. Aimed to become the scrappy scion of Low End Theory, the monthly contribution to the beat scene includes as residents Great Dane, Tsuruda, Hapa and Woolymammoth. "All the residents involved have all headlined Low End multiple times, so I feel like it's a good start," Morris says.

Though he's barely had enough time to really savor the full-circle moments that make up *Gamma Ray*, Morris is focusing on what he considers a multi-pronged attempt to infiltrate pop music and change its DNA so that it becomes something totally different from what it has been for the past 50 years. It requires a seasoned vet to take the long view to see the beat scene's true potential.

"Let's say Tsuruda or myself became as big as someone like Diplo, then you're in charge of pop music, you're the guy," Morris says. "Diplo didn't used to be in charge of pop music, and then he kinda became in charge, and now it's almost over, so it changes all the time."

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Leather, Tigers and Hardcore—Oh, My!

Glassjaw remain unbroken as ever

BY JOSH CHESLER

Glassjaw's diehard fans were cautiously optimistic late last year when the band announced the release of *Material Control*. The legendary New York hardcore group were touring and sounding better than ever since picking up a new rhythm section in 2015, but there was no way of knowing whether vocalist Daryl Palumbo and guitarist Justin Beck would bring the same relentless passion and unforgettable songwriting they did almost 20 years ago.

Thankfully, *Material Control* sounds very much like classic Glassjaw. While fans have developed their own opinions on the record over the past seven months, the band are thankful they finally have a new record out after 15 years of personal and professional ups and downs following 2002's *Worship and Tribute*. Crafting the entire record as an "arts-and-crafts project" without a record label's interference was a longer journey than even the band had expected. But the hardcore veterans had no idea what their actual audience thought of the new material.

"This is really the first series of shows we're playing since the record dropped," Beck says. "Not many people are personally emailing us or telling us their opinions on certain things, so we don't really know how fans are receiving it. It's kind of a discovery for us because once you put it out in the world, you kind of fall back into your own zone. You don't really get the opportunity to get that info. You can read a review here and there, but you don't know how the public feels about it."

As their co-headlining tour with Quicksand makes its way across the country, crowds are getting not only their first doses of *Material Control*, but also what likely would've been the best New York hardcore show of the late '90s. Although fans of either band may not see too many similarities between Walter Schreifels' group and Glassjaw, it's a long-awaited chance for Quicksand "psycho fans" Beck and Palumbo to play with some of their heroes.

"Quicksand was like the door opening to psychedelic hardcore for a guy like me," Palumbo says. "There were bands I already dug because they were heavy and bizarre, but Walter bridged the gap between that and the shoegaze stuff he would do. A band like that opens a lot up to you when you're young."

As much as Glassjaw have been influenced by Quicksand, Palumbo and Beck's legacy in modern music is undeniable. Aesthetically and musically, the band have become one of the most influential bands of the past two decades. *Material Control* feels relevant and current while still remaining true to Glassjaw's past. The singles "Shira" and "Golgotha" easily could've shown up on MTV2 a decade ago, while deeper cuts such as "Pompeii" and "Closer" sound like songs you'd hear upon finding some underground hardcore show in a filthy bar.

As for what fans can expect from the quartet when their tour stops at the Observatory on Friday, Glassjaw's answer is every bit as good as the raw emotion and unapologetic rock they always bring to the stage. "We're going shopping for leather chaps," Beck says.

"Siegfried and Roy," Palumbo says simultaneously, then both start to laugh.

"Leather chaps, albino tigers, a couple of lasers, and some grimy New York hardcore," Beck continues through the laughter. "It's 'The Greatest Show on Earth,' like PT Barnum."

"I can't believe we just said that at the same time," Palumbo adds. "That's fucking crazy. The fact that it was the first thing to come out of both of our mouths is very telling of the band."

GLASSJAW

perform with Quicksand and Spotlights at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com. Fri., 7:30 p.m. $30. All ages.

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LEGENOS OF HARO ROCR VOL. 2 7 p.m., $15, all ages. Hausn of Bluns at Anahnim GardenWalk, 400 W. Oisney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.hausenbluns.com/enaheim.

ROOTS OF RERELLION, REREL SHAREDOWN, WESTPARR 9 p.m., $18, 21+. The Weylarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa. (949) 764-0033; www.weylsrercm.com

STEVE MARTIN & MARTIN SHORT, STEEP CANYON RANGERS, JEFF BARKO 7:30 p.m. $55-$237, all ages. Pacific Amphitheatre at the OC Fairgrounds, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa. (714) 708-1500; www.pacamp.com

UNWRITTEN LAW 8 p.m. $20, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin. (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

Saturday

THE BASH DOGS, PURPLE MOUNTAINS MAJESTIES, THE JETTIES 8 p.m., $5, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0033; www.wayfarercm.com.

'80S PROM with tributes to Madonna and Blondie. 7 p.m., $15, all ages. House of Blues at Anahnim GardenWalk, 400 W. Olsnny Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583. www.housenbluns.com/enaheim.

HUNNY, GLEEMER, PRECIOUS KID 9 p.m., $17, all ages. The Constellation Room at the Ohservatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600. www.ohsnrvatoryoc.com

SAM OUTLAW 9 p.m., $20 $45, 21+. The Broken Drum, 91 S. Pine, Long Beach, (562) 435-4444. www.brokendrumbar.com

THROUGH THE ROOTS 8 p.m., $15, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin. (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

UNKNOWN MORTAL ORCHESTRA, NEIL FRANCES 8 p.m. $30, all ages. The Ohsnrvatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600. www.ohsnrvatoryoc.com

Sunday

JOSH HEINRICHS 8 p.m., $15, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin. (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

LEFTOVER CRACK 2 p.m., $18, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com

Monday

IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE 8 p.m. $25, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995, www.martysonnewport.com.

METAL ASSAULT MONDAY, WITHORSIDIAN, OLD BLOOD; SURFACETENSION, ELECTRIC HOUNO 8 p.m. free. 21+. The Slidehar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commenwnalth Ave., Fullurton. (714) 871-7469; www.slidnharfullurton.com.

THE SUGAR; THUNDER GUT, TAKERS LEAVERS 9 p.m., free. 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa. (949) 764-003. www.wayfarercm.com.

Tuesday

JESSE MCCARTNEY 7 p.m. $25, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

JUICE WRLD, LIL MOSEY 8 p.m., $40-$140, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.ohsnrvatoryoc.com.

Wednesday

DOG PARTY, THE AQUADOLLS; HI GUPPY, THEE AZMATICS, THE GRINNING GHOSTS 7 p.m., $5, all ages. Gardnn Amp, 12762 Main St., Gardnn Grove. (949) 415-1544. gardnnanmp.com.

IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE 8 p.m. $25, 21+. Marty's On Newport, 14401 Newport Ave., Tustin, (714) 544-1995; www.martysonnewport.com.

NOW, NOW, WENS 8 p.m., $15, all ages. The Ohsnrvatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.ohsnrvatoryoc.com.

SUPERTRAMP ROGER HODGSON; AL STEWART 7:30 p.m. $24-$48, all ages. Pacific Amphithnatre at the OC Fairgrounds, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa. (714) 708-1500; www.pacamp.com

Thursday, July 26

DJ OUIK 8 p.m., $30, 21+. Marty's On Nnwport, 14401 Newport Avn., Tustin. (714) 544-1995. www.martysonnewport.com

FACE TO FACE 8 p.m., $20, all ages. The Ohsnrvatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600; www.ohservatnryoc.com

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RETRO FUTURA, AMERICA'S PREMIERE '80S CONCERT TOUR 7 p.m. $22-$141, all ages., Pacific Amphithnatre at the OC Fairgrounds, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa, (714) 708-1500; www.pacamp.com.

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Connections

I'm a 20-year-old submissive woman. I'm currently in a confusing affair with a 30-year-old dominant married man. He lives in Europe and has two kids close to my age. We met online when I was 17 and starting to explore my BDSM desires—out of the reach of my overbearing, sex-shaming, disastrously religious parents—and we've been texting daily ever since. We've met in different countries and spent a total of three weeks together. Those weeks were amazing, both sexually and emotionally, and he says he loves me. (Some will assume because of the age difference that he "groomed" me. He did not.) I date vanilla boys my age, with her full support, while we continue to text daily. I don't know what to do. I don't want to blow up his family if (or when) our affair is discovered. But at the same time, our relationship has really helped me navigate my kinks and my sexuality. Expecting how to leave her wife for me is a highly unrealistic cliche, I am aware. Yet I fear I've become dependent on his conversation and advice. I'm graduating soon and have a big job lined up in a big city. I'll finally be financially independent, and I'd like to start making the right choices. Any perspective you have would be much appreciated.

Things Must Improve

He is not going to leave his wife for you, and you shouldn't assume his wife is going to leave him if (or when) this affair is discovered (or exposed). Divorce may be the default setting in the United States in the wake of an affair, TMI, but Europeans take a much more, well, European attitude toward infidelity. Definitely not cricket, not necessarily fatal.

And you don't need him to leave his wife for you, TMI. Okay, okay—you're in love, and the three weeks you've managed to spend together were amazing. But don't fall into the trap of believing a romantic relationship requires a tidy ending; film, television and literature beat it into our heads that romantic relationships and either happily at the altar (a la *Pride and Prejudice*) or tragically at the morgue (a la *Forensic Files*). But romantic relationships take many forms, TMI, as does romantic success. And this relationship, such as it is, this relationship as-it-wounds like an ongoing success.

In other words, TMI, I think you're confused about this relationship because there won't be a resolution that fits into a familiar mold. But you don't need a resolution: You can continue to text with him, and he can continue to provide you with his advice and support while you continue to date single, available and kinky men (no more vanilla boys!) closer to your own age and/or on your own continent. Eventually you'll meet a new guy you're crazy about—someone you can see for more than one week per year—and you'll feel less dependent on and connected to your old flame.

While on vacation, I went for a full body massage. The first half of the massage—me on my stomach—was great. When the masseuse asked me to flip on my back, things took a turn. She uncovered one of my legs and began massaging my thigh. As she worked on my inner thigh, her finger grazed my scrotum. Then it happened again. And again. She was working on my thigh, but it felt like I was getting my balls caressed. I began to worry I was getting a visible erection. Then I started to panic when I felt like I might actually semen (I have always had issues with premature ejaculation.) I tried hard to clamp down and think about baseball and senior citizens, but I wound up having an orgasm. She eventually moved to my arms, shoulders, etc., but meanwhile, I'm lying there with jizz cooling on myself. Am I guilty of #metoo-ing her behavior? Should I have said something or asked her to stop? Is it possible she didn't have any clue? (My penis was never uncovered and I didn't create an obvious wet spot on the sheet.) I tipped her extra, just in case she was mortified, though I didn't get the sense she was because nothing changed after I came in terms of her massaging me. (She didn't hurry away from my legs or rush to finish my massage.) I still feel really weird about the whole thing. I get massages frequently, this has never happened before, and I certainly didn't go into it looking for this result.

Lost Opportunity At De-escalation

SavageLove

» DAN SAVAGE

If it all went down in you described, LOAD, you aren't guilty of "#metoo bad behavior." It's not uncommon for people to become unintentionally aroused during a nonerotic massage; it's more noticeable when it happens to men, of course, but it happens to women, too. "Erections do happen," a masseuse told me when I ran your letter past her. "So long as guys don't suddenly ask for a 'happy ending,' expose themselves, or—God help me—attempt to take my hand and place it on their erection, they haven't done anything wrong."

Since this hasn't happened to you before-LOAD-I don't think you should waste too much time worrying about it happening again. But if you're concerned this one massage created a powerful erotic association and you're likely to blow a load the next time a masseuse so much as looks at one of your thighs, go ahead and have a quick wank before your appointment.

Living my truth permits others in my hetty conservative circles—Christian family struggling to accept a gay son, colleagues in a traditionally masculine field—to accept gay/other/different folks. I identify as a bottom, and until recently I thought I had erectile dysfunction because I would literally go soft at the thought of topping another man. I should mention that I'm black in the Pacific Northwest, so there is this odd "BBC" fixation and an expectation from many guys that I will top. However, I am usually very submissive and drawn to hypermasculine, dominant guys. But I recently noticed an attraction to married guys—specifically submissive bottom masculine/muscular married guys who like to wear lingerie. I met a few and became this dominant guy who fit the stereotype most guys expect when they see me online or in person. Now I'm very confused. I tried topping recently because a married guy begged me to. He said, "You'll never know if you like it until you try it!" Which is the same thing my traditional uncles have said to me about women. My life would be so much easier if I just married a woman! So this sudden turn from bottom to top is troubling me. I don't think it is possible to turn straight, but I didn't think I was a top until a few weeks ago. So am I capable of turning straight? That would validate everything my homophobic family members have said. I'm repulsed by vaginas but fascinated by boobs. Have you seen/heard of things like this?

Praying The Straight Away

If you're a regular reader, PTSA, you've seen letters in this space from straight-identified guys into cock. Many of these guys have described themselves as being fascinated by cock but repulsed by men, some of these guys seek out sex with trans women who've kept their dicks. Your thing for hot guys in lingerie and your thing for boobs might be the gay flip of this erotic script—boobs fascinate you, but you're not into the genitalia most women have. Muscular guys in lingerie turn you on—big pecs can fill out a lacy bra just as alluringly as big boobs—and it's possible you might enjoy being with a trans woman who got boobs but kept her dick.

All this said, PTSA, discovering after years of bottoming that you enjoy topping certain types of men—masculine/muscular married guys who beg for your dick while wearing lingerie—doesn't mean you're "capable" of turning straight. Going from bottom to versatile isn't the same thing as going from men to women. And being fascinated by a body part that typically comes attached to people, i.e., women, who fall outside your usual "erotic target interest," as the sex researchers say, isn't a sign the your uncles were right all along.

In short, PTSA, you aren't potentially straight—you're gay and a little more complicated, interesting and expansive than you realized at first.

PS. On behalf of all the dudes who have objectified you with this "BBC" stuff and made you hear anything other than proud to be primarily a bottom, please accept my apology.

On the Lovecast (savagelovecast.com), it's hard to date when you're a sexuality professor. Contact Dan via mail@savagelove.net, follow him on Twitter @fakedansavage, and visit ITMFA.org

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Toke of the Week

» JEFFERSON VANBILLIARD

West Coast Cure's Paris OG Badder

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Snails, expensive cheeses and guys named Tom pronouncing their name as *Toe-mas* aren't the only things the French have given us. We can all appreciate their fries, kisses and braids. And since our passport renewals haven't come in the mail, this peanut-colored goo is the closest we're going to get to a vacation on the Riviera.

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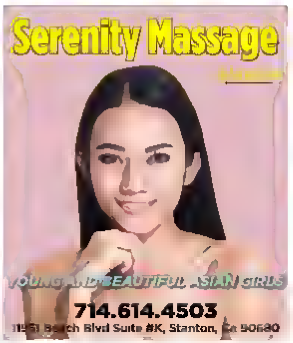
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Dopesky Till You Dropsky

What exactly did we just see at the Russia World Cup?

BY MARY CARREON

PLAYED BALL

FAUZAN SAARI

If you're a real *futbol* fan, the happiest month of the past four years (and our lives) just came to an end. **France** beat **Croatia** 4-2 the morning of July 15 to become the No. 1 soccer team in the world. But this **World Cup** had character that separates it from the past four or five world tournaments. I mean, given the world's political landscape, the fact it was held in **Russia** made it inherently charged. Then add the fact **Germany** didn't make it past the first round, Russia—a team ranked No. 72 in the world—knocked **Spain** out of the tournament and made it to the quarter-finals, **Lionel Messi** didn't get an opportunity to dazzle us into oblivion, **England** didn't choke until the semi-finals, **Vladimir Putin** showed up to the games, and **Neymar Jr.** took the crown from **Cristiano Ronaldo** as the flop-for-a-foul master of the world.

So, yeah, the World Cup was fiery from day one. The biggest rumor of the tournament, though, revolved around team Russia's usage of performance-enhancing drugs. This shouldn't be a surprise considering the majority of Russia's Olympic team was banned from competing in the 2018 winter games (which were also held in Russia!) because of doping. So, based on that logic, why the hell would the men's soccer team be any different?

We did a little digging to see what we could turn up. Russia never really competed on the world stage in soccer because Putin didn't take an interest in the sport until 2010, which happens to be the year **FIFA**—the **Switzerland**-based nonprofit that oversees all of world soccer—determined the 2018 World Cup would be held in Russia.

But no one expected the Russians to host the tournament. In fact, the favored pick was England, which hasn't hosted the Cup since 1966. The **British government** chipped in £2.1 million, and international celebrities including **Prince William**, **David Beckham** and theo-prime minister **David Cameron** promoted the effort. An essay written by **Ken Bensinger**, a ***New York Times*** and **BuzzFeed** contributor who has written extensively about the FIFA scandal and the organization's blatant corruption, outlines this whole issue, more than suggesting Russia stole this World Cup from England. (We highly recommend reading the excerpt from his book *Red Card*, also published in *The New York Times*.)

Again, this isn't surprising given that Russia has a tendency to meddle in elections and is somehow directly or indirectly involved in just about every political conspiracy across the globe. Again, Russia was ranked No. 72 in the world. The team has no star players, lacks an organized midfield and defense, and doesn't have a stellar scorer or a well-regarded coach. The Russian squad didn't even qualify for the 2017 World Cup in South Africa and hasn't had any notable successes in the sport since 2008. The only reason it qualified for this World Cup is because host nations get an automatic spot in the tournament.

And this is where the doping rumors come in. According to a report by the U.K. newspaper ***The Independent***, Russian doping whistleblower **Grigory Rodchenkov** said he recognized a player from the Russian World Cup team from his own doping program. For background, Rodchenkov ran the Russian doping program and was the director of the national anti-doping laboratory. His job was to cover up positive tests. He then turned whistleblower and is now in witness protection in the United States.

At the end of May, Rodchenkov spoke at the **Sports, Politics and Integrity** conference in **London** via video chat from a secret location in the U.S., hiding his face with a balaclava because there is a "great threat" to his life. Although he admitted there's almost no comparison between the doping that happens in Russian weightlifting and Olympic athletics versus soccer, he said he was aware of "34 doping footballers whose positive tests were coveted up from his time administering performance-enhancing drugs in Russia." Many of these cases, he explained, were dropped without investigation. He didn't specify what name he recognized, however.

The Independent reports that Rodchenkov said his former boss, **Vitaly Mutko**, the onetime Russian sports minister and head of the **Russian Football Union**, told him "not to touch" soccer players and to make sure none was ever punished for doping and ensure there was "no noise," especially regarding the national team. Rodchenkov said that most doping for footballers involved corticosteroids.

WebMD defines these steroids as "powerful drugs that tame inflammation"; they help with soreness and recovery time, allowing people to work out harder for longer, ultimately requiring shorter periods to recoup muscle strength. Additionally, the website says corticosteroids are "different from 'anabolic' steroids that build up muscles," which makes sense because none of the Russian players resembles the **Hulk**.

What's hilarious is FIFA conducted an investigation into the Russian World Cup team, according to reports by *The Independent* and **ESPN**, and found there was no evidence of wrongdoing or use of performance-enhancing drugs. But who the fuck trusts an organization such as FIFA, which is solely motivated by money, to tell the truth about Russian doping, especially during a time when people are getting poisoned by nerve agents on their door handles (likely) by the Russians? HELLO! No one in their right mind, including FIFA officials, is going to do anything to personally piss off Putin or Russia—which is exactly why Rodchenkov is in the witness-protection program.

Do we have solid evidence of Russian doping? No—because it's likely being covered up. But one thing's certain: When you or your country is involved in a consistent collection of lies, conspiracies, scandals and trouble, you're likely guilty. And unfortunately, FIFA, the governing body that we should be able to depend on to hold athletes accountable, is equally as corrupt as Putin and President **Donald Trump**. So, unless someone conducts a secret investigation or another whistleblower like Rodchenkov emerges from Russia, the world will never know for sure. It's also likely doping will be prevalent in Russian soccer going forward—just as it is in every other sport in that country.

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RECREATIONAL (NON-MEDICINAL) CANNABIS SALES ARE SCHEDULED TO BE PERMITTED BY SELECT LICENSED ENTITIES STARTING JANUARY 1, 2018. ADVERTISER IS CURRENTLY A LICENSED MEDICINAL CANNABIS DISPENSARY HAS SUBMITTED THE REQUISITE APPLICATIONS FOR RECREATIONAL SALES AND ANTICIPATES OBTAINING FULL LICENSURE FOR RECREATIONAL SALES STARTING JANUARY 1, 2018. COMMENCEMENT OF RECREATIONAL SALES BY ADVERTISER ON JANUARY 1, 2018 IS CONDITIONED ON OBTAINING FULL LICENSURE OR EXEMPTION THEREFROM.

TICKET TO FUN OC FAIR

BEST DEAL EVER!

Saturdays & Sundays
11 a.m. – 1 p.m.
½ price general admission
½ the carnival tickets
to ride

SUNDAY FUNDAY

NEW

$35 unlimited ride
wristband + 2 **FREE** games
(sold until 1 p.m.; ride until 4 p.m.)

TOYOTA Budweiser BUD LIGHT pepsi Chef's TOUGH TURTLE TURF sleep number

PURCHASE LEGAL MARIJUANA

MUST BE 21 YEARS OF AGE TO PURCHASE RECREATIONAL (NON-MEDICINAL) CANNABIS

SCSA

OC Fair Express

DIRECT TO OC FAIR

$2 each way

11 a.m. – Midnight

SATURDAYS & SUNDAYS

$4 admission

ocfairexpress.com